

Signalling upgrades on the railway between Reading, Bracknell and Gatwick Airport

February 9, 2024



Railway reliability upgrades by **Network Rail** will mean the closure of the railway between Reading, Bracknell and Gatwick Airport – with buses replacing trains.

As part of the upgrade work to support the reliability of the railway, engineers need to complete the re-signalling and level crossing upgrade work between Reading, Bracknell and Gatwick Airport station during the February half term (Saturday 10 to Sunday 18 February) which means that customers will need to plan ahead and check before they travel.

Temporary closures of level crossings at Wokingham station and Easthampstead Road (Star Lane) will also mean that diversions remain in place for road users until 19 February.

Buses will replace South Western Railway (SWR) and Great Western Railway (GWR) trains between Reading, Bracknell and Gatwick Airport, extending to Ascot and Aldershot on some weekends. More detailed travel information is available on the **SWR** and **GWR** websites.

From Saturday 10 to Sunday 18 February, Network Rail will be completing re-signalling work in the Wokingham area, installing 43 new signals.

The project team are also continuing to upgrade four level crossings; two at Wokingham station and two on Easthampstead Road (Star Lane):

- At Easthampstead Road (Star Lane), engineers will complete work to modernise the level crossings, installing new equipment that will extend the life of the crossing by 30 years. These crossings will need to be closed completely until 04:00 on 19 February.
- At Wokingham station, a manually controlled barrier will be upgraded with CCTV monitors helping to keep railway and road users safe. These crossings will continue to be closed completely until 04:00 on 19 February.

This work is the conclusion of [Network Rail's £116m Feltham and Wokingham re-signalling programme](#) which, over the past four years, has seen upgrades to key signalling equipment and level crossings controlled by the Feltham Area Signalling Centre and Wokingham Signal Box, which jointly cover 80 miles of railway and 500 separate pieces of signalling equipment in key areas of the South Western Railway (SWR) network including Feltham, Hounslow, Shepperton, Twickenham, Windsor & Eton Riverside and Wokingham.

Once complete, customers will benefit from a modern digitised signalling system that will help improve train performance, increase future capacity, result in fewer delays, and enhance the safety of level crossings.

While the railway is closed, engineers will also be working at Wokingham Junction to upgrade switches and crossings as well as completing routine maintenance and structure examination to make best use of the railway being closed for nine days.

Tom McNamee, Network Rail's Wessex route infrastructure director, said: "These works are critical to us being able to deliver a safe, modern and reliable service for customers travelling on our network between Reading, Bracknell and Guildford.

"There's never a good time to close the railway. However, delivering the bulk of these works during the half term break, when fewer people travel by rail and the schools are closed, helps us minimise the disruption to our customers who rely on this important stretch of railway.

"We're grateful to customers and local residents living alongside the railway for their patience and understanding while we continue upgrading the railway."

A spokesperson for South Western Railway commented: "We would like to remind customers to check before travelling ahead of these vital improvements, as buses will replace our train services between Reading, Bracknell and Ascot at differing times between Saturday 10 and Sunday 18 February.

“Customers heading to Twickenham for the England v Wales rugby fixture on Saturday 10 February should also plan ahead.

“We’re very grateful for our customers’ patience as this work is carried out.”

Great Western Railway station manager for the North Downs line Andrew Gallagher said: “As we continue to invest in the railway, this work is really important to ensure we can maintain and improve resilience.

“Buses will replace trains between Reading and Gatwick Airport between Saturday 10 and Sunday 18 February; journeys will take slightly longer, and we urge those travelling to check their journey beforehand.

“Thank you in advance for your patience and understanding.”

Photo credit: Network Rail